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July 28, 1961

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MEMORANDUM FOR MR. McGEORGE BUNNY
THE WHITE HOUSE

Subject: Initial Blue Reaction to
President's Speech

Attached is a paper prepared in THE which
Roger Hilman thought might be of interest to you.

L. D. Battle
Executive Secretary

S/S-RO

JUL 28 1961

A true copy of signed original

Attachments

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR

REVIEWED BY Houghton DATE 4/7/86

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TO : The Secretary
THROUGH : S/S
FROM : INK - Roger Hillman
SUBJECT : Intelligence Note: Initial Bloc Reaction to President's Speech

Soviets Stress Berlin Pretext for Arms Buildup. Initial Soviet radio comments on President Kennedy's speech dwell on US arms spending and shift emphasis from Berlin by arguing that the US is fanning the Berlin crisis in order to justify a predetermined arms program. Calling Berlin a pretext and denying that it is a cause of the US military buildup, they suggest to the home audience that the danger of military action in connection with Berlin is minimal.

East Germans Deny War Danger. East German commentators go further and say flatly that there will be no war. They argue that the US cannot and will not wage war for West Berlin and that there is "absolutely" no cause for "panic."

References to Negotiations. The Soviets quote President Kennedy's statements on (1) willingness to undertake discussions and (2) the Soviet security interest in Central and Eastern Europe, but say that he made no specific proposals. East German commentators do more to highlight the theme of US willingness to negotiate, and stress the President's reference to eliminating factors of disturbance and friction in West Berlin. The East Germans allege that the President's remark reflects a substantial difference between the US approach on Berlin and the rigid line advocated by the Federal Republic.

Conclusions. Bloc propaganda reaction so far seems designed (1) to win diplomatic support for the Soviet position by contrasting US arms buildup with USSR's proposals for peaceful settlement; (2) to draw attention to need for negotiations, and (3) to calm fears of war among bloc populations, particularly in East Germany.

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